



Testimony in support of
**H.B. No. 5321: "AN ACT ESTABLISHING A STATE OMBUDSMAN'S OFFICE FOR BEHAVIORAL
HEALTHCARE COVERAGE."**
Human Services Committee Public Hearing
Tuesday, February 7, 2023 ~ 11:00 a.m.

Dear Representative Gilchrest, Senator Lesser, Representative Case, Senator Seminara, and members of the Human Services Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. My name is Luis Perez and I wish to share comments in support of **House Bill 5321, "AN ACT ESTABLISHING A STATE OMBUDSMAN'S OFFICE FOR BEHAVIORAL HEALTHCARE COVERAGE."**

I am the President and CEO for Mental Health Connecticut (MHC), a 114-year-old community-based nonprofit focused on person-centered, recovery-oriented care delivered through evidence-based practices.

MHC strongly supports this legislation, which will establish a state ombudsman's office for behavioral healthcare coverage. Creating this much-needed office will undoubtedly help to address the coverage disparities experienced by independent providers.

Far too often, independent providers are faced with burdensome hurdles to receive payments and explanations regarding denied payments, amongst many others. These unnecessary barriers take away from the time the clinician could be spending on treating their clients. In a time where there is a significant shortage of providers and long wait lists for clients, this is unacceptable.

This is also a matter of access to care. When providers are forced to limit their client base due to onerous barriers, the residents of Connecticut stand to be affected the most. We need to ensure open access to all forms of behavioral healthcare – and this legislation is a step in the right direction in doing so.

MHC urges you to support H.B. 5321 and all policies that support eliminating unnecessary barriers for behavioral healthcare providers. When we support our behavioral healthcare providers, the residents of Connecticut stand to benefit the most.

Respectfully,

Luis B. Perez, LCSW / President and CEO